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Framing a new paradigm for

Irish abortion discourse:

The move from deadlock to dialogue

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to frame a new paradigm for Irish abortion discourse that will facilitate movement on the issue from the existing static position of polarisation and deadlock. It is proposed that reconsideration of the issues in more sensitive, nuanced and balanced terms would do much to progress an increased awareness of, and ultimately compliance with, international reproductive rights norms. This thesis suggests that, in order to move from deadlock to real dialogue, access to abortion must be reconsidered not merely in terms of individual rights-based arguments but crucially, as a universal human rights issue incorporating a broader social-good context that is inextricably linked with healthcare, justice, gender, equality and the caring ethic. In order to advance this new paradigm shift, including a review of the complex and deep-rooted cultural and historical reasons for Ireland's current position, it is important to analyse Irish abortion discourse from varying perspectives including power dynamics, feminism, humanitarianism, national identity-formation and international human rights law. The new dialogue-facilitating discursive paradigm proposed by this thesis is one that will consider abortion as a universal human right and a social good that is indivisible from justice, equality and access to healthcare. The introduction of care ethics and compassion into the discourse would enable such a framework to emerge.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Part 1: Theoretical Perspectives and Context.....	9
Chapter 1. Power and Abortion Discourses	9
1.1 Power and Discourse from a Foucauldian Perspective	9
1.2 The Case of Savita Halappanavar	11
1.3 Power and the Law.....	13
1.4 Polarisation in Irish abortion discourse post-Savita	14
1.5 Untrustworthy women: The discussions surrounding women’s bodily and mental autonomy in the parliamentary debates on the Protection of Life during Pregnancy Act 2013.....	17
1.6 Choosing the correct discursive frame	20
1.7 A critique of the usefulness of Foucault’s theories for analysing Irish abortion discourse.....	23
1.8 Habermas’ ‘discursive democracy’ theory and Foucault’s ‘politics of difference’ as tools for moving the discourse forward.....	25
Chapter 2. Feminist Theories and Abortion	26
2.1 Abortion as a tool of patriarchal oppression: the radical feminist perspective	26
2.2 Manipulating the discourse: claims about abortion and negative mental health consequences.....	28
2.3 The silencing of women’s voices in the dominant discourse	30
2.4 The reality of abortion as told by women.....	32
2.5 Identity questions: How abortion threatens traditional gender roles.....	34
2.6 Intersectional feminism in Irish abortion discourse	35
2.7 The Abortion Pill Train: A feminist act of civil disobedience	41
2.8 Re-evaluating the liberal rights based approach in Irish abortion discourse	45
2.9 Feminist care ethics as a helpful discursive tool	47
Chapter 3. Irish Abortion Discourse from a Religious, Post-Colonial and State-Building Perspective	51
3.1 Solidifying gender norms and Church-State relations post-independence.....	51
3.2 The intersections between abortion discourse and Irish national identity.....	52
3.3 Current examples of polarisation in Irish abortion discourse based on differing perceptions of what it means to be ‘Irish’	57
Part 2: Empirical Aspects: Are you dying enough yet? Are you suicidal enough yet?.....	60
Chapter 4. The language of human rights and Irish abortion discourse	60
4.1 Human rights instruments ratified by Ireland as relevant to abortion	60

4.2 Human Rights criticisms of Ireland’s approach to abortion.....	65
4.3 Case Law: A,B,C v. Ireland and relevant international jurisprudence	70
4.4 Dignity as a fundamental human right: the tragic cases of Ms Y and PP v. HSE.....	74
Conclusion.....	80
Bibliography.....	84
Annex	95